

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Senator James E.  
"Buzz" Elkins of Clinton.

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly learned of the passing of our most trusted friend and colleague, Senator James E. "Buzz" Elkins of Clinton; and

WHEREAS, Senator Elkins was an eighteen-year veteran of the General Assembly, having served eight years in the House of Representatives and ten years in the Senate; and

WHEREAS, during his illustrious tenure in the legislature, he supported numerous pieces of legislation to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, he strongly supported and sponsored legislation to strengthen laws against drunk driving, establish the vehicular homicide law, revise the state's penal code, improve the state's educational system, and provide additional support and aid for the mentally ill and the handicapped; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Senator Elkins was the eloquent and knowledgeable sponsor of Governor Alexander's Better School Program, that led to the largest increase in funding for education in the state's history; and Governor Alexander credited him personally with the passage of this landmark legislation; and

WHEREAS, Senator Elkins earned the universal respect and admiration of his peers on Capitol Hill for his innate ability to work with his opponents, rather than against them; and

WHEREAS, through this great spirit of bipartisanship, Senator Elkins was successful in ably guiding to passage the Better Schools Program and numerous other essential bills; and

WHEREAS, Senator Randy McNally remembers Senator Elkins as his “political mentor” and notes that he “accomplished much for Anderson County because of his ability to work with people, regardless of their political party”; and

WHEREAS, education was very special to Senator Elkins, because his wife Sue is a sixth-grade teacher at Oak Ridge’s Jefferson Junior High School and a former Tennessee Teacher of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Senator Elkins served with acumen and alacrity on almost every major committee of the House and Senate, including Finance, Ways and Means, Education, Judiciary, Transportation, Conservation and Environment, and State and Local Government; and

WHEREAS, he also was a valuable member of special committees on government reorganization, education reform, and fiscal review; and

WHEREAS, a gentleman who exuded positive attitude and who worked assiduously for the betterment of his district, Senator Elkins was the instrumental force behind obtaining state funding for improvements to Frost Bottom Road and Highway 61 between Norris and Oak Ridge and the construction of the present Highway 61 between Clinton and Norris, a major Anderson County thoroughfare in an area of potential growth; and

WHEREAS, he was also a great supporter of the state parks system, and especially Norris Dam State Park in his district; and

WHEREAS, his positive outlook and his unwavering belief in the potential of Anderson County was contagious, and his optimism and diligence has inspired numerous other citizens to excel in their professional and civic lives; and

WHEREAS, his outstanding legislative service was recognized by means of his receipt of numerous awards, including those presented by the Tennessee School Boards Association, Governor’s Advisory Committee on the Handicapped, Tennessee Vocational Education Advisory Council and Remove Intoxicated Drivers; and

WHEREAS, while serving in the General Assembly, he also practiced law, first with his father, the late J. Leon Elkins, a former trial judge, and later with attorney Jerry Shattuck; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from the rigors of the legislature, Senator Elkins served as a founder and partner in Elkins, Fosbinder and Carr, a Nashville-based government relations firm; and

WHEREAS, realizing that citizenship entails many responsibilities as well as privileges, Senator Elkins also served his community in numerous civic capacities, including meritorious service on the board of directors of the United Way of Anderson County, Melton Hill Regional Industrial Development Association, Tennessee Resource Valley, Knoxville City Ballet, Roane State Community College Foundation, Methodist Medical Center of Oak Ridge, Anderson County Chapter of the American Heart Association, Appalachian Chapter of the American Red Cross and Oak Ridge Community Foundation; and

WHEREAS, he further evidenced his ongoing concern and commitment to his community as a member and chairman of the board of the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce and campaign chairman of the Anderson County United Way Fund in 1990; and

WHEREAS, a gentleman of indisputable integrity and wisdom, Senator Elkins also served on the Methodist Hospital Foundation and was a volunteer with the Boy Scouts of America; he was a valuable member of Leadership Oak Ridge alumni; served astutely as co-chair of the finance committee of the Oak Ridge Housing Development Corporation; and was also a member of the East Tennessee Minority Purchasing Council and Center for Neighborhood Development; and

WHEREAS, most recently, he had consolidated efforts to erect a permanent campus for Roane State Community College in Anderson County; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Clinton High School, Senator Elkins received his bachelor of science degree in business administration from East Tennessee State University and his J.D. degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law; and

WHEREAS, at the time of his death, Senator Elkins was serving with distinction as senior vice-president and community development coordinator with First American National Bank in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Sue Schild Elkins of Clinton; daughter Laura Lee Elkins of Knoxville; mother Maude E. Elkins of Clinton; and sisters, Emma Sue Brummitt of Clinton and Anna Lee Elkins of Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, even as we note the irreplaceable loss of “Buzz” Elkins, we must give thanks that Tennessee has benefited so greatly from his experience, his good sense, his generosity, and his unwavering commitment to providing a quality education for every child in Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor the memory of Senator James E. “Buzz” Elkins, reflecting fondly upon his indelible legacy of proficient public service and professional excellence. Senator Elkins always upheld the public trust and his commitment to the welfare of his fellow citizens is truly inspirational.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our condolences to Senator Elkins’ family and many friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to the Elkins family, with this final clause omitted from such copy.